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MAY 1979

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TO: D - The Deputy Secretary
FROM: NEA - Harold H. Saunders

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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Pak/Afghan Relations Deteriorate

We would like to flag for you the gradual deterioration in Pak/Afghan relations which could lead to more serious border incidents.

The Afghan press has been carrying on a vitriolic campaign against Pakistan over the past two months. On May 9, the DRA charged that a large number of Pakistani "forces" attacked a district in Paktika Province along the Pak/Afghan border and warned that "those who occupy foreign lands and who carry out unwarranted aggression will be consumed."

In a speech the same day, President Taraki reiterated charges that Pakistan is interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs. Referring to border violations by both Iran and Pakistan, Prime Minister Amin recalled in a May 10 speech that Afghanistan's friends (the USSR) would provide "everything we wish," including "every sort of ... needed weapons," but claimed the DRA did not require foreign soldiers to fight for it. On May 13, Taraki expressed solidarity with the Pushtun and Baluchi peoples in Pakistan, echoing an earlier reference by Amin to Afghan patriotism extending from "the Oxus to the Indus."

Pakistan has also voiced charges against Afghanistan, protesting numerous Afghan incursions into Pakistani airspace and alleging that the Afghans have shelled refugee camps on the Pakistani side of the border.

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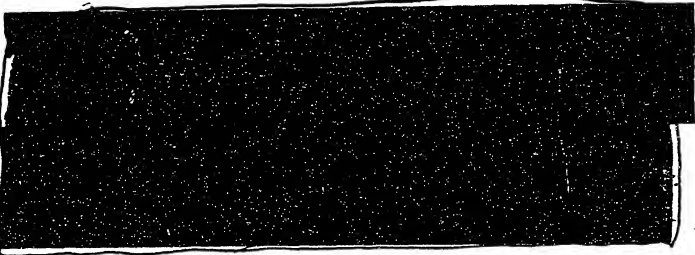
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These exchanges of charges point up the tense and uncertain situation along the Pak/Afghan border which is heightened by the presence of about 45,000 Afghan refugees on the Pak side of the Durand Line and continuing serious internal security problems for the DRA on the Afghan side. The heated atmosphere which exists could be a factor in precipitating a serious incident.



We also flag for your attention a possible Pak/Afghan confrontation at the meeting of the Nonaligned Coordinating Bureau scheduled for June. Afghanistan opposed the seating of Pakistan as an observer at the Nonaligned meeting in Belgrade last year. Although Pakistan has now withdrawn from CENTO (previously the Afghan reason for opposing Pak membership in the NAM), Cuba, the USSR and perhaps other radicals may be lobbying against Pakistan on the grounds the GOP is interfering in Afghanistan's affairs. A Pak/Afghan altercation over this issue, which would undoubtedly bring out the Pashtunistan and Baluchistan questions as well, would add additional burdens to the already fragile relationship between the two countries. On the other hand, Afghan acquiescence in Pak membership in the NAM could signal a more cooperative mood.

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